

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

When the tornado went through Norwalk (and the recently identified second tornado that traveled north of Wilton) on August 11, it gave me pause. It made me think of how much it means to all of us to have the Wilton Area, Norwalk Area, Ontario, Kendall, Elroy Area, Tomah, Sparta Area, and other local fire departments! The men and women volunteers (and in some departments paid staff) keep us safe. In addition to going out at all hours of the day and night to make life-saving runs, they are routinely training for various case scenarios. They continue to learn best practices and the latest techniques, maintain the equipment, and purchase new equipment. Thank you to all of our fire department crews and emergency response workers, including several members from St. Paul's Lutheran Church who volunteer locally!

In recent months, we have been hearing about the many wildfires on the west coast of the U. S. and in other parts of the world. More recently, we have been hearing about wildfires in northern Minnesota, near Superior and the Boundary Waters. Known as the Whelp fire, this fire began with a lightning strike.  
([minnesota.cbslocal.com](http://minnesota.cbslocal.com))

We have heard about the efforts of firefighters and other rescue workers who have had major roles in saving lives, evacuating people, attempting to keep the fires from spreading, and much more. How thankful we can be for their efforts too, and the support of their family members and employers that allow them to serve their neighbors-in-need in this way.

As we recall all the ways in which fire departments help us and others throughout the world, I would like to mention an upcoming special event. This event allows us to celebrate our local firefighters and to learn more about fire safety in a family-friendly way. The Tomah Fire Department will be celebrating their 150th Anniversary with a special day of events. The sesquicentennial celebration will take place on Saturday, August 28. It includes the following:

- \* Fire truck parade at 11 a.m. on Superior Avenue in Tomah
- \* Fire truck equipment show, starting at 1 p.m., at Tomah Recreation Park
- \* From 2-4:15 p.m., 4:45-7 p.m., and 7:30-11 p.m., live music
- \* From 2:30-5:30 p.m.-- free bounce houses, junior firefighter combat challenge course, smoke house and caricatures.
- \* Evening--Minnesota Fire Engine Club colored/illuminated water show (Itinerary information is from the *La Crosse Tribune*, Monday, August 16, 2021, p. A2)

I hope that you will participate in the events of August 28 and show your support. This would be an especially valuable event for our children to attend, to help them to learn more about the role of firefighters and other emergency personnel, and about fire safety.

May we continue to pray, as we have been praying during Sunday worship, for an end to the massive wildfires, drought conditions, floods, and other occurrences throughout the world. May we also pray for all those who have been affected by these occurrences. Let us include in our prayers, our local firefighters and emergency response crews who help to keep us safe from harm. May God watch over them and protect them.

Peace,

Pastor Cathy